

The Anglican Digest



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Waiting for the Coming

Advent means "coming" in Latin. It is the first season of the church year and has four Sundays. It is a time set apart in our liturgical life. You will notice the color changing from green to purple (representing preparation, penitence, and royalty). The Advent wreath, a green wreath with candles, one for each of the four Sundays, is a way of marking time during this season. *The Gloria* and other hymns of praise are omitted and we move from Eucharistic Prayer A to Prayer B which emphasizes the Incarnation (Christ fully human and fully divine) as we prepare for Christ's coming.

During the four weeks of Advent we prepare our hearts and minds so that we will be able to fully celebrate the season of Christmas (December 25 - January 5). It is a season of looking back to the first Christmas while living in the confidence that Jesus will come again. It is a time of preparation, expectation, waiting, caring, compassion, kindness, and hope.

It is important for us to encourage our children to live into this

time separate from Christmas. This can be a great challenge as we see and hear the intense commercial messages of our culture that now seem to come at us in late October! Children need to hear the message that this time is more than shopping and parties. They need to know that Advent is about reconciliation and forgiveness, a time of reaching out and beyond themselves to those who may be hurt by our actions. It is a time of moving beyond ourselves and into the lives of others — a light in the darkness. It is a time to reflect on and continue in our journey with Jesus, the Lord of our lives.

While prayer is crucial at all times, Advent is a very special and wonderful opportunity for families to join together and reach out to God. Get an Advent Devotional containing prayers and activities for individuals and families and use them during this wonderful time as we wait patiently for the coming of the most precious gift.

— The Rev. Edward O'Connor,
St. Peter's by-the-Sea,
Gulfport, Mississippi

Christmas Cactus

I was a little shaken last week when I noticed the Christmas Cactus was well on its way to full bloom in the Chapel. Knowing little about plants generally, and having never even noticed if the plant was or wasn't blooming before, I was at a loss to understand what this may mean in the broad scheme of things both immediate and eschatological. Weren't the seasons being pushed artificially enough already for economic reasons? Must nature now endorse that horticulturally as well?

Turning to the ultimate authoritative window through which all valid earthly wisdom might be accessed, www.google.com, I learned the parameters of the meaning of "Christmas," in terms of a cactus blooming, was much more fluid than might ordinarily be determined by the calendar coordinates: December 25. It was suggested that one might control the parameters of a blossoming on or near the 25th by skillfully regulating the availability of light and warmth. At this point, I was beginning to fall asleep in front of the monitor having absolutely no interest in controlling anything, or accumu-

lating any more information about this or any other cactus. It was the week before Thanksgiving, and why was I, for that matter, even thinking about Christmas in this micro-focused way?

Then, it struck me: the ultimate focus of gratitude for all Christians ought rightly to be that God became flesh and dwelt among us. By the gift of faith, we are empowered to grasp and live out this pivotal fact that changes the way we see everyone and everything. Maybe that's the reason the Holy Spirit directed my attention this year toward something that I had never noticed before nor in which I had any interest, a Christmas Cactus blooming the week before Thanksgiving.

No one was ready for his coming the first time. Even those most intimately involved were at a loss to understand what was happening but they were obedient to what God instructed them to do. The only one who tried to control anything was Herod. When in response to the Wise Men's visit, he inquired of scholars what the scriptures had to say about a king being born in his domain, they informed him that one was to

be born in Bethlehem of Judea [Micah 5:2]. His insane response to this perceived threat was to have all male children in Bethlehem under the age of two murdered. Joseph, informed by an angel in a dream, arose and fled obediently, taking Jesus and Mary to safety in Egypt.

Regardless of how hard Satan tried to derail the mission of the Messiah to liberate captive Israel, the forces of Hell were beaten back continually by the Word. Neither Satan nor his demonic minions could discredit him. On the hill of Calvary, the final battle was won by the One we know to be the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The purpose of God becoming flesh had been accomplished.

Now, his body in time, the Church, has the hallowed ministry of delivering the limitless fruit of that atoning death on Calvary. Like the apostles who distributed the broken fish and bread, we members of Christ's Body have the privilege of delivering, as intercessors, the Kingdom provision that God has for each and every one in every condition and circumstance imaginable. We access and deliver by faithful intercessory prayer, and the action and labor that

issues forth from it, the abundance of Kingdom fruition. As agents of his Kingdom coming, we are the instruments through which he reconciles, heals, and makes whole. Without our faithful and willing participation, little if anything can be accomplished.

That I have been called and ordained to propagate his truth as the substance of Life, now and eternally, is my privilege and joy.

He came unnoticed once, but he will come again. This time, however, it will be obvious to all. Unlike the Christmas Cactus, there is no way of controlling the time of his appearing.

This Advent, why not claim the Kingdom citizenship he restored to you on Calvary? Be a willing and enthusiastic herald of his coming again. Be a conduit through which flows "the water welling up to eternal life," renewing the face of the earth, by offering those near you an opportunity to be as ready and as enthusiastic as you are when he comes again. "Prepare ye the way of the Lord!"

MARANATHA!

— The Rev. Robert J. Godley,
Saint Barnabas,
Ardsley, New York

Preparing for Christ

We live between Christ's two advents in the flesh, and our life as Christians is defined by them. The collects for the beginning of Advent and for Christmas Eve lay it out very clearly. He has already come to us *in great humility*, to suffer and die for our redemption; and he shall come again *in his glorious majesty to judge both the quick and the dead*. And what we shall be judged by at his second advent is whether, and how, we have lived by the grace and mercy of his first. Now *in the time of this mortal life* it is our holy desire, joyfully [to] receive him for our Redeemer, so that we may with sure confidence behold him when he shall come to be our Judge.

Advent therefore is pre-eminently the season of preparation. The world both helps and hinders this task. The sending of cards, the purchase and wrapping of presents, the decorating of trees, the stringing of lights, the singing of seasonal music, the preparation of food and drink, the reunions of friends and family, the opening of doors on Advent calendars and even the awful expectation of Santa Claus (who is, after all, Saint Nicholas,

Bishop of Myra, and witness to Christ's divinity) — all of this is, or can be, an authentic part of Christian life, an element in the preparation for Christ's advent. On this point, there is nothing better than T. S. Eliot's wonderful poem, *The Cultivation of Christmas Trees*. Yet all these customs can also become a way of ignoring and forgetting the reality of his advent, a way of turning up the volume of this world's noise to drown out the angel choirs. It is a question of attitude and outlook.

"Who shall abide the day of his coming, and who shall stand when he appeareth?" There is only one way of dealing with Christ's coming, and that is by Christ himself. The church's tradition, therefore, has spoken of Christ's three advents: his first advent, *in carne*, in the flesh; his second coming, *in judicium*, in judgment; and his intermediate coming, *in mente*, in the mind and heart. Here and now, in virtue of his first coming, and in preparation for his second, he comes into our minds and hearts, through his Spirit working in them through the Word and Sacrament he has entrusted to his Church. Above he comes to us in

the Sacrament of the Altar, the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion, every celebration of which is an Advent of Christ "in miniature." In every such celebration we are faced with a moment of judgment and mercy, an opportunity and a challenge. It is a question of being ready and able to receive what it is he wills to give. If we are not ready and able to receive what he wills to give — which is to say, we do not will what he wills — then the sacrament is a sign of judgment, a sign of what we are not and do not want to be. But if we do will what he wills to give us, then it is to us a sign of mercy, of what he is making us, and what we will to be made.

The Church therefore has always taught the necessity of preparation for Communion (cf. I Corinthians 11.28). This duty is taught repeatedly in the BCP Catechism, p. 582; Exhortations (p. 85-89, which we read on Advent Sunday), and worked throughout the whole service of Holy Communion, which is focused on the preparation of the heart: "for if the benefit is great, if with a true penitent heart and lively faith ye receive this holy Sacrament, so is the danger great,

if ye receive the same unworthily" (p. 85).

In earlier centuries, preparation for communion could be an elaborate, meticulous process of self-examination, repentance, and gratitude. In the 17th and 18th century, manuals of devotion were published to guide this preparation, which assumed a process extending over several days, and thus undertaken infrequently (perhaps two or three times a year). After the Anglo-Catholic revival of the 19th century, frequency of communion gradually increased, and from the 1930s Parish Communion movement, weekly communion became more and more common, and communicants' manuals of preparation at first kept pace. But by the 1980s, the very notion of preparation for communion had faded away: the requirement of being baptized, let alone of general confession and absolution, is viewed with distaste in many quarters.

A happy balance was struck by Austin Farrer, one of the great figures of Anglicanism's mid-twentieth century "Indian summer," an Oxford don, a philosophical theologian, chaplain

(friend and pastor of C. S. Lewis), and a preacher, whose sermons are a wonderful union of theological clarity, literary power, and practical realism. In one of these ("Fish out of water", collected in *Said or Sung*, 1960), he gave this counsel on preparation for communion, which years ago I copied into my Prayer Book:

It is hard to prepare for Communion, because it is hard to face the truth. But it is not at all complicated or puzzling. You have merely to accept what you know God demands of you, and to renounce what you know he forbids you, and to be sorry. Remember something to thank him for, and someone to pray for, and you have made your preparation.

One could not do better this Advent and Christmas than follow Farrer's advice.

— The Rev. Gavin G. Dunbar, St. John's, Savannah, Georgia, and Editor of the *Anglican Free Press*

Christmas; Present

We use your gifts for selfish ends

For profit, power, and place;

For oily politic that slides

Through transience without grace.

We even foul our earthly nest,

This lovely home you've given.

If we can't serve each other here,

How can we manage heaven?

We shout each other down while drugged

With aggrandizing pride.

One wonders that the Christ could call

His Church, "Beloved Bride."

We cannot seem to mend ourselves.

Elixirs spill and run.

To heal our self-made wounds,

O Lord,

You give to us your Son.

— A. F. Schultz
Tucson, Arizona

Welcome...
to SPEAK's new-
est Board mem-
ber.



The Rt. Rev. John C. Bauerschmidt, born in Portsmouth, Virginia, while his father served in the United States Navy, grew up in Columbia, South Carolina. He attended Kenyon College in Gambier, Ohio and the General Theological Seminary. In 1984, he was ordained deacon by the Rt. Rev. William Beckham of Upper South Carolina. He became curate at All Saints', Worcester, in the Diocese of Western Massachusetts. Bishop Beckham ordained him to the priesthood in 1985.

He and his wife Caroline were married in 1986. In 1987, Bshp. Bauerschmidt began graduate studies at New College, Oxford University, England where he also served as priest-librarian (chaplain) at Pusey House.

In 1992, he became rector of Christ Church, Albemarle, in the Diocese of North Carolina, serving until 1997. While there he completed a D.Phil. thesis for Oxford and was awarded the degree in 1996. He became rector

of Christ Church, Covington, Louisiana in 1997 and was elected 11th Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Tennessee in October 2006.



The Great Teacher

And a woman in the city, who was a sinner... brought an alabaster jar of ointment... and began to bathe his feet with her tears and to dry them with her hair. Then she continued kissing his feet and anointing them with the ointment... Luke 7: 36-50

We read the liturgy of Ash Wednesday on the first Monday of Lent, for Richard had been too ill on Ash Wednesday. Like a typical Anglican, I had my Prayer Book with me, but did not bring the Bible. When we came to the gospel reading, Richard recited it for us even in the face of heavy sedation for pain. I saw a great memory.

With each visit, I would always ask what prayers we should say. He would always ask for prayers for Kay, never for himself. I saw pure selflessness.

One afternoon, as we were about to share Eucharist together,

another judge came in and Richard asked him to join us. I asked if there were special prayers we should say that day. Richard's response was, "Pray for the Courts: Almighty God, who sits in the throne judging right; we humbly beseech thee to bless the courts of justice and the magistrates in all this land; and give unto them the spirit of wisdom and understanding, that they may discern the truth, and impartially administer the law in the fear of thee alone; through his Son our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen." (BCP, p. 821). I saw compassion.

He would often ask for special collects, the Collect of the day and the Psalms. I especially remember the collect for first Sunday in Lent, Psalm 42, Psalm 43, and Psalm 51. He knew them from memory. I had to use the Prayer Book. He tried to teach me the Latin names of the Psalms. With Richard and Kay, we read together Psalm 131, *Domine, non est*, Psalm 130, *De profundis*, Psalm 139, *Domine, probasti*.

He asked if I had read Josephus. He told me how his mother had asked him to teach her Greek. She read Josephus and then they would discuss it. I

knew I could not count the number of people Richard had spent hours with teaching about law, politics, and the Bible, as his mother had done before him. His mother had taught 7th grade in Texarkana. She died in the classroom teaching. His brother had been in the school and had witnessed his mother's death and his voice quivered as he spoke about how difficult that must have been for his brother. I saw true empathy.

One especially difficult day, when his doctors feared he was near death, he had had many visitors. He remarked that the visitors came to talk to each other. I saw awareness and wisdom laced with humor.

We talked about the red, white, and blue in all the intravenous fluids that were nourishing him, like the flag. He talked about always having a flag in his office. I commented, "and it is still here." He snappily replied, "and it should be." I saw a patriotic ot.

We talked about his coming 68th birthday on March 26th. He was born the day after the feast day of the Annunciation of Gabriel's visit to Mary. He chuckled in his characteristic

way which I wish so much I could imitate that his birthday was therefore too close to the annunciation for him to be the anointed one! We wondered what season he was born in. We looked up in the Prayer Book that in 1936 Easter was on April 12th. Richard almost instantly calculated that he was born on the Friday of Lent 4. His eyes glowed as he talked of the color rose being used liturgically on Lent 4 as it can be on third Sunday of Advent. He talked of a longing to see rose vestments. What extravagance to have vestments you can only wear on two Sundays of the year. He said, "It is the alabaster jar, the extravagance of the alabaster jar of ointment used by the women who washed Jesus' feet with her tears, dried his feet with her hair, and anointed Jesus with the costly oil." I saw a life of extravagant love.

He worried that it might be a sin that sometimes his illness depressed him. Then he began to tell me how his mission in his dying was to let Kay and his family know how to live. He began to see his suffering as an awareness of the rest of the suffering in the world around him. I saw what it is like to be inclu-

sive and related to the world.

One morning as we read Morning Prayer, he divulged one of his secrets of living. After he recited the *Te Deum*, a canticle urging us always to give thanks and praise, he told me that during these past months when doctors told him bad news about his health, he would recite the *Te Deum*, and he could make it through the difficult time.

Then he told me about a recent visit from a St. Vincent's hospital chaplain. He asked Richard if he expectd a cure. "No," said Richard, "but I am hoping for management of my disease." The chaplain then said, "let's pray for management." "No," Richard responded, "let's pray for a cure!" At that same visit he told me about plans for his funeral. He considered it a gift from him to his family and friends. He was working on his obituary as well. I saw a man living in reality but still open to a miracle.

Each visit we would also discuss which saint's day it was and if something might be learned from that saint. He constantly asked what God was teaching him in all this. He had lived with this tumor, lymphoma, for 28

years. He would sometimes jokingly refer to it as "lime-oma," as it had been misspelled in one of his x-ray reports. There must be a lesson in it. Living with cancer for 28 years can make you either a very grateful or very bitter person. His was a life of gratitude. "What I have learned," he said, "is to live in the present, teach Kay how to live and now teach her how to die." I saw a great teacher.

Te Deum Laudamus

*You are God; we praise you;
You are the Lord; we acclaim
you;
You are the eternal Father:
All creation worships you.
To you all angels, all the powers
of heaven,
Cherubim and Seraphim, sing in
endless praise:
Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of
power and might,
Heaven and earth are full of your
glory.
The glorious company of
apostles praise you.
The noble fellowship of
prophets praise you.
The white-robed army of
martyrs praise you.
Throughout the world the holy*

*Church acclaims you;
Father, of majesty unbounded,
your true and only Son, worthy
of all worship,
and the Holy Spirit, advocate
and guide.
You, Christ, are the king of
glory,
the eternal Son of the Father.
When you became man to set us
free
you did not shun the Virgin's
womb.
You overcame the sting of death
and opened the kingdom of
heaven to all believers.
You are seated at God's right
hand in glory.
We believe that you will come
and be our judge.
Come then, Lord, and help your
people,
bought with the price of your
own blood,
and bring us with your saints
to glory everlasting.*

— BCP, p. 95

— excerpted from *Healing Presence* by the Rev. Joanna J. Seibert, M.D., foreword by Phyllis Tickle, preface by Keith Miller. Published by Temenos Publishing and available through the Anglican Bookstore (order form on p. 42). Portions of the proceeds from this book are going to St. Peter's by the Sea in Gulfport, Mississippi, destroyed by Katrina. Portions of this story first appeared in *The Living Church*, April 12, 1992.

Gifts

I remember as a child in New York, during the holiday season, looking at my parents' *New York Times*. *The Times* always conducts a fundraising campaign, with daily stories that describe the travails of many of the city's neediest children. I would always try to imagine what it was like to be one of those children. It was so distant from the environment I had grown up in. I could not imagine what it was like to live in that kind of poverty or with such sadness. Even when I was a young adult I could not really fathom those pictures of starving children with swollen bellies and flies feasting on the moisture of their eyes.

In the show *The Fantasticks*, known as "the longest running musical," there is a scene where the ingenue, Luisa, is being wooed by El Gallo, the Narrator. They are singing the song *Round and Round*:

Round and round,
Till the break of day.
Candles glow,
Fiddles play.

Life is a colorful carousel.
Reckless and terribly gay!

Luisa looks out on the city, sees a man being beaten, and continues to laugh and sing because she thinks she is looking at a circus. The man being beaten is really Matt, her sweetheart.

Though we are not as cavalier about suffering as Luisa was, our ignorance points us to the famous passage from the Bible: "When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways." (I Cor. 13:11)

Now I have no excuse, I know that there are people who suffer in obvious and also unseen ways, I understand that the appropriate response is not to distance one's self from it, but to be present in some way in the midst of humanity's suffering and injustices. Part B of the commandment "Love your neighbor as yourself" includes love as responsibility. "Be responsible for yourself, and be (appropriately) responsible for your neighbor."

I know it is hard enough just being responsible for ourselves without adding what feels like the burden of others. And yet a life that thinks only about itself is only half a life. We are all a part

of something so much bigger. The other half of us is outside of us. We are like the confused disciples who say "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food?" And he answered them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these you did it to me" (Matthew 25:35-40).

Not only is Jesus present in the garment of the poor and the oppressed, but we too are present. Jesus and all of us abound in the Newark jail system, in Darfur, and next door to us in Nutley, Bloomfield, Clifton, Belleville, or Rutherford.

The culture of Christmastide sees this season as a time to give and do for others.

In this time of abundance and merry making, one gift we can always give is the gift of ourselves and our time.

— The Rev. Pamela Bakal,
Grace Church,
Nutley, New Jersey

Guadete Sunday

Guadete Sunday comes from the Latin for rejoice. The traditional entrance hymn for this Sunday starts with the word Rejoice. Liturgically we move into the second part of Advent. The liturgy turns its focus from the consideration of things to come to the first Advent of Christ at his birth. The return of Christ in all of his glory at the end of time is replaced by the consideration of his first coming in the flesh. The mystery of the incarnation and the birth at Bethlehem becomes the focus of the readings. We are called by the liturgy to look back and consider the greatest of God's actions in human history: God in the person of Christ Jesus breaking into our experience and sharing fully in our existence.

This relates to the previous weeks of Advent by the way of Hope. The birth of Jesus as Messiah was the fulfillment of long-awaited hope. The return of Jesus in all of his glory is the hope to which we yearn even now. The two are intertwined and together they illuminate each other. The hope of one makes sense of the hope of the other. Liturgically the Church has reinforced this understanding of Advent by providing

the *O Antiphons* for use with Evening Prayer from the 17th of December until the 23rd of the month. These short prayers are used before the recitation or singing of the *Magnificat* (Song of Mary), used at all services of Evening Prayer or Evensong.

The *O Antiphons* date from the seventh century and draw upon the ancient biblical names and titles for the promised Messiah. Rooted in hope, they are designed to muster in us a community of hope that not only looks to the fulfillment of the promises of God but also attempts to fulfill the promise of hope that God has made possible in Christ Jesus. In other words, we become the living expression of God's promises.

The easiest place to find the *O Antiphons* is in that masterful hymn of the season (#56) *O come, O come, Emmanuel...* Each of the antiphons is incorporated in the hymn (that is why there are dates by each of the verses). Each verse of the hymn reveals the hope and expectation which is conveyed in the biblical name. Emmanuel, God with us, is the means of our ransom from sin and death. Wisdom is what orders God's kingdom and from the foundation of creation, she is the way to true

knowledge. The Lord of Might made his will known in the deliverance of Israel from slavery and the challenge to bring to the rest of the world the vision of Sinai that no one might be enslaved by amnesia and the drive to consume. The title, Branch of Jesse's Tree, means that Jesus is part of us and has entered our history, overcoming the tyranny of Satan and death. As Key of David, our Lord opens to all the way and reality of eternity, a way which is lit by the Day Spring from on High and puts to flight the shadows which cling too closely to our lives. As Desire of Nations, our Lord binds our hearts if we will allow and makes divisions of this life cease when we enthrone him as King of Peace.

Each antiphon, in its own way, points to the ground of our hope and thereby the hope which is ours in Christ Jesus. As we light the Rose candle this Sunday let us remember our joy is grounded in the one who gave his all that all of us might be a sign of hope in a world enslaved by its own devices and desires.

— The Very Rev. William Willoughby, III, St. Paul's,
Savannah Georgia

Who Needs Healing Prayer?

There's a story in the gospels about a time when Jesus encountered a man with a "withered hand." (Mk. 3:1-6; Matt. 12:9-14; Luke 6:6-10). The story is about the Pharisees' attempts to trap Jesus (once again) for his failure, as they saw it, to keep the Jewish law. But this is also a healing story and one of the things that stands out is that Jesus commanded the afflicted man saying "stretch out your hand." When the man obeyed Jesus' command his hand was "completely restored."

It's interesting that the man hadn't asked to be healed. Maybe he didn't know who Jesus was. Maybe the man didn't think it was possible for his hand to be healed. Maybe he just wasn't thinking about healing that day. Whatever was going through the afflicted man's mind, Jesus saw an opportunity to heal and, at the same time, to teach the Pharisees an important lesson about compassion. What's more, the man who was healed obeyed Jesus without any question or complaint when Jesus told him to stand in front of the crowd and hold out his hand.

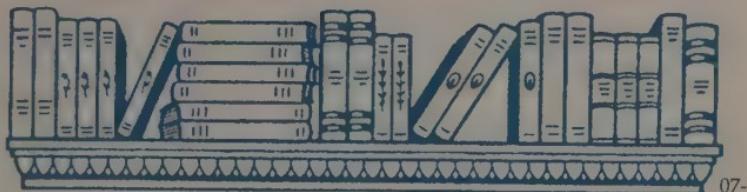
I think there are a number of lessons we can take away from this story that relate to healing prayer. For one, sometimes we put aside our need for healing. Many of us just press on and muddle through with whatever is troubling us. We don't want to burden anyone. Or, maybe we think our problem is insignificant in light of the problems of others.

We're not meant to just muddle through enduring the burdens we carry. Jesus came so that we might have life and have it in abundance (John 10:10). Jesus wants us to reach out our hands and allow him to heal us, whatever burdens we carry.

Healing is not just about physical healing. You may be carrying a burden from a troubled marriage, a concern about your career, an unruly or rebellious child, a friend who is in distress, a financial worry . . . Jesus would have us stretch out our hand and allow him to heal us. We have this gift of intercessory prayer available to us. I can't think of a reason not to take advantage of it in whatever way the parish in which you find yourself offers it.

— The Rev. Deborah D. Apoldo,
St. Francis in the Fields,
Harrod's Creek, Kentucky

CREAM OF THE CROP



The Anglican Book Club's Winter 2007 selection is Stephen Tomkins' *William Wilberforce: A Biography*.



When God changes the world, he always uses a person to whom he gives a holy dissatisfaction with the ways things are. William Wilberforce was such a man.

Through his astounding perseverance, the slave trade was eventually abolished in the 19th century in Great Britain. "Sacred compulsion joined with a visceral revulsion against injustice to give him not just passion but unshakable commitment," writes Stephen Tomkins. It is our delight particularly to offer this to our readers in 2007, the 200th anniversary of the 1807 Abolition of the Slave Trade Act, to which Wilberforce gave his life's work.

(over for Enrollment Form)

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The Face of Jesus

Isn't it surprising that the God of the Universe comes down to earth as a baby? Not just surprising, but utterly dangerous! After all, babies are weak, unable to defend themselves, need to be looked after, and can't say very much. One of the Christmas carols put it like this:

*Enough for him whom cherubim
worship night and day –
A breastful of milk and a mangerful
of hay.*

We might have expected that he would have come as a mighty king, or a wealthy big businessman, or a film star, but he would have none of it: a baby with very little to his name!

Jesus was also born into a world where, so far as the politically powerful were concerned, babies were expendable. After all, Herod decided to get rid of all the boy babies around, simply to ensure that his status and future were assured, and, apart from the kindness of the innkeeper, Jesus wouldn't even had been given a place to be born.

We, in Northern Ireland, pride ourselves as being a caring and

hospitable people, a society which is welcoming and friendly, and in many ways we are. But, this Christmas, more than ever, we need to be careful. We are living increasingly in a society where the strong are at the top of the pile, and the poor are forgotten. We inhabit a world where a high proportion of our children live below the poverty level, many are destroyed while still in the womb; and we are far from hospitable to people who come to live here from different races and different places – even after decades of Irish people being welcomed into other cultures.

The truth is that it is the very people whom we might miss, or even who might come as a threat to us – like Jesus in his day – are the ones in whom we may see something of the face of Jesus in our generation.

Having experienced the frailty of the world, the danger of political power, the weakness of babyhood and infancy, and the absence of welcome in the world he came to save, Jesus, unsurprisingly, in his adulthood, tells us this: When people are thirsty and we give them drink, naked and we clothe them, hungry and we feed them, we do it not only for them but for Jesus.

That's what will make this Christmas come alive for all of us. Look for the face of Jesus out on those streets, and in the most surprising of places over the next few days.

— The Rt. Rev. Harold Miller,
Bishop of Down and Dromore,
Northern Ireland

Anglican Words

1549 Date of first Book of Common Prayer. Later: 1552, 1559, 1604, 1662; USA: 1789, 1892, 1928, 1979.

abusus non tollit usum (the abuse doesn't take away the use) The principle that legitimate parts of Christian tradition don't have to be discarded because of misuse at some time in the past.

ambiguity It is often said that one cannot be happy as an Anglican unless one is willing to live with it; related to concept of Christianity as a religion of paradox, poetry, and mysticism.

Anglican Communion A loose-knit fellowship of 38 self-governing provinces consisting of the Church of England and those in communion with it; current membership is 70+ million. The

Archbishop of Canterbury has a primacy of honor but not of jurisdiction.

apostolic succession The concept of a continuous succession of bishops by laying-on of hands, from the apostles to the present (accurate only from 2nd C.). Also called **historic episcopate**.

Book of Common Prayer (BCP) The official liturgy of the **Anglican Communion**; each province has its own edition. Considered the main unifying force in the absence of a pope.

Canterbury City in SE England, seat of archbishop who is **pri-mate** of England; word sometimes used in names of Anglican organizations.

Caroline divines Theologians of 17th C. England, named for reigns of Charles I and II; marked end of Calvinism as dominant theology in England and beginning of classical Anglicanism.

churchman In England, a member of the established church; hence, often used to indicate members of other Anglican provinces in English-speaking countries.

churchmanship Refers to the three historic movements or schools of thought among Anglicans, each reflecting emphasis on one part of the **three-legged stool**:

catholic (high): emphasizes TRADITION, objective piety, corporate aspects (church, ministry, liturgy, sacraments), doctrine of Incarnation; began with Oxford Movement in early 19th C., but with reference to **Caroline divines**; became part of Ritualist movement.

evangelical (low): emphasizes SCRIPTURE, subjective piety, individual aspects, personal conversion, doctrine of Atonement; began in 18th C.; usually very little ritual.

liberal (broad): emphasizes REASON; orig. indifferent to doctrine and liturgy; now, open to any doctrines or liturgical practices even if in conflict with official church teaching; began in late 17th C. ("Age of Reason") and called Latitudinarian; may use ritual, if considered relevant, but not necessarily traditional forms.

Cranmer, Thomas Archbishop of Canterbury under Henry VIII and Edward VI (1532-1553); burned at stake under Mary I, (1556); principal author of **1549** and **1552 Prayer Books**.

diaconate The order of deacons; in Anglican churches, they are ordained ministers, may wear clerical clothing, and are addressed "The Reverend."

episcopal Pertaining to bishops; used in name of some Anglican provinces.

episcopate The order of bishops; in Anglican churches, they are styled "The Right Reverend" (except archbishops and some **primates**, styled "The Most Reverend"); also, the time in office of a particular bishop.

General Convention Legislative assembly of the Episcopal Church (USA), consisting of House of Bishops and House of (clerical and lay) Deputies; meets every three years.

historic episcopate Term now used for apostolic succession, esp. in ecumenical relations.

Lambeth Conference The decennial meeting of Anglican

bishops from around the world; has no legislative authority over provinces; named for Lambeth Palace, London residence of Archbishop of Canterbury, where conferences met from 1865 (first) through 1968.

Lambeth Quadrilateral A statement of four principles (scripture, creeds, sacraments, and episcopate) as starting-point for discussions on Christian unity; adopted by **Lambeth Conference** of 1888; also called Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral, since first adopted by **General Convention** of 1886, meeting in Chicago; complete texts in 1979 BCP, pp. 876-78.

lex orandi, lex credendi (the law of praying is the law of believing) A formula reflecting the fact that Anglican doctrine is not spelled out in detail but implied in the way we worship.

primate The chief bishop of a province; most have title of Archbishop or Presiding Bishop.

real presence The doctrine that Christ is objectively present in the Eucharist, without taking a position as to how this happens; cf. transubstantiation (RC), con-

substantiation (Lutheran), virtualism (Calvinist) and concept of eucharist as mere memorial (Zwinglian).

three-branch theory The theory that the Catholic Church has three branches: Roman, Greek (Orthodox), and English (Anglican); first stated by William Palmer of Worcester College, Oxford in 1838; long popular among Anglo-Catholics but now discarded as overly simplistic.

three-legged stool Name commonly given to the principle of scripture, tradition, and reason as the sources of authority for Anglicans; first stated by Richard Hooker in 1597.

via media The concept that the Anglican church is a middle road or "golden mean" between Roman Catholicism and extreme Protestantism; first stated by **Caroline divines**; popularized by John Henry Newman in 1837 but later repudiated by him as he moved toward the RC Church.

— The Rev. Lawrence N. Crumb, Eugene, Oregon

[Fr. Crumb is currently serving as Interim St. Trinity's, Salem, Oregon]



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A PRAYER FOR

Utah

O God, who day by day doth pierce the desert
with the brightness of Thy presence, lead us
'neath the heights and across the great salt flats
to the temple of Thy holiness. In storm or
danger, in drought or plague, send, O Father,
sweet birds of mercy to keep Thy Utah folk in
safety
upon the promised land.

Guard the painted cliffs, the vermillion spires
and rocky spans; keep too the watered furrows
and well-kept streets where springs Thy blessing
to our homes in love and hope;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

You Can't Get Christ Out of Christmas

I have heard a lot of talk during the past couple of weeks about "this store that is going to use the word 'Christmas'", or "that store that isn't" ... Who is going to wish you "Merry Christmas" and who is not as you patronize their business — but the reality is, try as you can, you cannot get Christ out of Christmas.

The word "Christmas" is a shortened form of the phrase "Christ Mass" — the first church service on Christmas Day. Many think that by dropping the word Christmas they have affectively removed Christ from Christmas — but consider: the popular alternative is to use "Happy Holidays," but the word holiday is, in itself, a shortened form of the phrase "holy day" — so one is left with the need to explain exactly what holy day are we celebrating, and what makes it holy? "Season's Greetings" is no better, for we are left with the questions — "What season?" and, "Why are we wishing others well because of it?"

But apart from words, there are many other things that happen during the Christmas season. An important one is decorations. We

put up Christmas trees — (there's that word Christmas again). Evergreens have traditionally been used because the triangular shape reminded one of the Holy Trinity. Also evergreens do not drop their foliage, a symbol of eternal life, a promise of God through our Lord Jesus. The shape of the wreath — circular, no beginning and no end, is another symbol of eternity. Lights on the tree remind us that Jesus is the Light of the World. The star or angel atop the tree reminds us that both were present in the night sky on the eve that Jesus was born ... and also recall the Star of Bethlehem that drew the Wise Men to the place of Jesus' birth.

In the Middle Ages in Germany a play called "The Paradise Tree," a story about Creation of the World and Adam and Eve, was performed annually on December 24th. Since apple trees had lost their fruit and foliage, apples were fastened on evergreen trees. The weight of the apples bore the branches down, but a German glass blower discovered he could create lightweight ball-shaped ornaments from glass and these, in the shape of the world, reminded people that God was the Creator of the world through the

Word. Later, wafers were hung on the trees as decoration and to remind people of Holy Communion.

And other symbols? Gifts, stockings, gingerbread houses, even Santa Claus ... all are Christ-centered symbols of Christmas ... but morsels for another time. Yes, try as you can, you can't keep Christ out of Christmas ... there's some holiday food for thought.

— The Rev. Guido F. Verbeck, III,
St. Paul's, Shreveport, Louisiana

Coming a Long Way

When we say "Merry Christmas" it's too easy! It would be to our blessing to take into account this season the amazing sacrifice Jesus made to step out of his home in heaven to be born for us. It's an incredibly long distance: from his greatness to our sinfulness.

Biblical theology relies on the truth of two facts: the sinfulness of sin and the greatness of grace. And because the distance between God and us is so great, so is the length he would come to reach us for our salvation.

Modern theology tends to water down the extent of human sinfulness. It's too hard a pill for

some to swallow. We can be easily seduced. Because we are not as bad as "you know who," then we are not all that bad. But the Bible teaches that, "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," and that, "none are righteous, not even one." Only when we own our sinful nature can we appreciate the greatness of grace. Only then can we begin to appreciate what the Baby in the manger represents to us.

I hope you have a wonderful and Spirit-filled Christmas. Because this is the season when some come to church for their annual visit, I encourage you to be on the lookout for members of your family or friends who would appreciate an invitation to one of the Christmas season services in the parish where you worship and minister.

Lord, you have bridged the gigantic gulf between you and us by sending your only Son to be born for us. Thank you for coming such a long way. Thank you for rescuing us from our sin and making us your children. Help us not to miss this great lesson this Christmas season. In Jesus' name. Amen.

— The Rev. Chuck Collins,
Christ Church,
San Antonio, Texas

The Call to Worship

There are lots of expressions of Christian worship. Growing up in the Baptist Church, I have seen everything from the very formal Sunday service of my parents' church to the much more expressive outpourings at a summer tent revival. In seminary, one of our field trips my first year was to a Pentecostal Church in Harlem. It was truly a different experience! Four hours after we walked through the front door, following several breaks for food and watching any number of people being "slain in the Spirit," we exited the building to return to what, for us, was a more "normal" liturgical experience.

Anglican worship has the reputation of being done "decently and in order." I'm happy for that. Anarchy in liturgy drives me crazy, as does an over-personalization of the worship of Almighty God. However, there is a fine line between a properly conducted liturgy, where both the transcendence and immanence of God is expressed, and the caricature of "the frozen chosen." This latter arises from an over-emphasis on not showing any emotion at all in a worship

setting, lest it be seen as in poor taste. This, unfortunately, is what far too many folks think of when they think of the Episcopal Church. How often, I wonder, do we fall into that trap?

Some of the most astounding passages from the Bible describe liturgical settings that, to our sensibilities, would be almost as foreign as that Pentecostal Church was to me twenty years ago. For example, when the Ark of the Covenant was recaptured from the Philistines, who had taken it in battle, King David danced before the Ark in joy and thanksgiving. Mind you, he didn't just dance before the Ark, he did so stripped down to his birthday suit: as my grandmother used to say, "naked as a jay bird." When the people of Israel returned to Jerusalem after their Exile in Babylon, the Torah, rediscovered by Ezra, was read aloud in the place where the Temple had stood. As Ezra read from the Scriptures, the people wept openly. Have you read Psalm 150 lately? It is a liturgical Psalm, written to be sung in the Temple. It talks of praising God "with the blast of the ram's horn...with lyre and harp...with timbrel and dance...with strings

and pipe...with resounding cymbals...with loud-clanging cymbals." That sounds like joyful, energetic worship to me! And why not? Whom are we worshipping but the One True God, the Maker of heaven and earth, the Creator of all that we perceive in the Universe and more!

So, we come to the Cathedral Church of St. John. What is the attitude of worship in this place? I have to admit that I am too new to the Cathedral truly to have a complete answer to that question. I know that, as does every church with more than one liturgy on Sunday morning, each service will have its own personality. That is well and good. Within each service, though, are we coming with joy in our hearts? Are we arriving at our accustomed place (boy, do Episcopalians have accustomed places!) with an expectation that we will have an experience of that same God who, as is described in the Book of Amos, "...made the Pleiades and Orion, who turns deep darkness into the morning, and darkens the day into night...?" Do our responses reflect that expectation? Do we "make a joyful noise unto the Lord?" Or, rather, are

we determined to do everything "decently and in order?" Are we simply saying the words and going through the motions?

These are the important questions to keep foremost in our minds, as we experience ever more deeply what it is to be children of God and disciples of Christ and worship the Lord in spirit and in truth.

— The Very Rev. Mark Goodman, Dean, The Cathedral Church of Saint John, Albuquerque, New Mexico



The Howard Lane Foland Library at Hillspeak

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Beyond Busy

James Gleick wrote a book entitled *Faster*, with the subtitle, "The Acceleration of Just About Everything." The book talks about the nature of time, and how the meaning of time has changed. Now it's all about hurry, efficiency, getting on quickly to the next thing. We've become multitaskers. We are worried about how to be most productive. We want to make every minute count. We see books on sale such as *30 Second Bedtime Stories*, marketed for parents who just don't have time for a full 15-minute bedtime with their child.

"Why do we speed up more and more?" an interviewer asked Gleick. "Because we can," he answers, "and we get a visceral thrill from speed. It gives us a rush." That's the word. Rushing gives us a rush. And we can't deal with finitude, limits, not being able to do it all.

Thomas Merton summarized our situation when he said, "The rush and pressure of modern life are a form, perhaps the most common form, of its innate violence. To allow oneself to be carried away by a multitude of conflicting concerns, to surrender to

too many demands, to commit oneself to too many projects, to want to help everyone in everything, is to succumb to violence. More than that, it is cooperation in violence."

I Kings 19 takes us to another world and another time, but to a problem not so different. The prophet Elijah has been called to bring the people of Israel back to faith in their God. Elijah has labored mightily for God, but in this story he is exhausted, depressed, worn down by pushing relentlessly and never coming up for air.

And so he goes on a day's journey out into the wilderness, sits down under a solitary broom tree, and in despair says, "I can't do it any more. It is enough; now, O Lord, take my life, for I am no better than my ancestors." Haven't we all known times when all the busyness takes its toll? Times when we've worked so hard, pushed ourselves to the limit, seen that there's still more to do. Times when the well runs dry, when there's no more water down at the bottom, when it is hard to move on.

Then Elijah goes on a journey of forty days to Mt. Horeb, the same mountain where Moses

received the Ten Commandments. There he glimpses a possibility beyond the exhaustion. "Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord," a voice says. And when Elijah does, he faces a blasting wind, and then an earthquake, then a fire, all signs of God's powerful presence. But then, after the fire, there is a still, small voice, as many translations put it, or a gentle whisper, or a hushed sound. He hears, just barely, the voice of God.

What exactly he "heard" in that "still small voice," we can't know. It seems to have been only a brief time of profound awareness of God. And it only came after forty days of stepping aside from his labors, breathing deeply, clearing his head and his heart, and listening for God to speak. It took him some time to be able to listen to God.

We need time too — to step out of the fast lane, the endless stream of busyness, to let our wells be filled with living water again and to be able to listen to God.

— The Very Rev. Samuel Lloyd,
Dean, The National Cathedral,
Washington, D.C.

Guest Quarters at HILLSPEAK



Whether seeking the serenity of an Ozark mountain retreat, searching shelves in Operation Pass Along, or doing research in the Foland Library, Hillspeak's guest quarters are ideal. Scenic vistas from atop Grindstone Mountain and the proximity of Eureka Springs draw visitors from around the world. Each unit accommodates at least four people with a fully equipped kitchen. See them online at anglicandigest.org or call for more information or to make reservations. Linens are supplied but no maid service. Plan to spend some time with us.

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An Ordination Charge

What are we to say about the content of holiness to each other and our people, and with them to all those around us, today — holiness which alone will make for Peace?

I offer you three, necessarily summary, answers to my own question:

One of the most important of the many contributions of the just retiring Bishop Peter Selby has been to note and to draw inferences from the frequent use both by Jesus and by Paul of money language, and of images and metaphors from wealth to point up human — and Christian — disobedience to God, human and Christian idolatry. So I'm in no doubt that among the sharpest, and the most complex, choices for us, if we are longing to grow in holiness, and especially if we live in the Western, Northern world, are those around wealth, resources, justice, trade, water, food, climate, pollution, corruption — and utterly entwined with them, choices about peace, the use of force, and violence. As all of us know, these are critically hard even where individual choices can be made, infinitely harder still because so

many of them are, as we say, political in the sense that we live within states, alliances, global systems of trade; the more I seek to grow in holiness, located where I and you are located, the more I understand freshly and welcome the powerful, indeed overwhelming language of the classic forms of Confession that I remember not so many years ago thinking "way over the top!"

Second, the New Testament is toughly streetwise, in calling us to Christ-like ways of everyday behavior in the face of habits of speaking, looking, and interacting with those around us that are the stuff of the TV news, of every local paper, and of counseling rooms and divorce courts today: "the works of the flesh are obvious: idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these" (Gal. 5.19-22; and among much else see Ephesians 4.17-6.9 for a more leisured, but no less direct, statement of the same convictions).

Third, and at the head of that streetwise list in Galatians 5 (though by no means always in that position): "fornication, impurity, licentiousness"; "entirely out of place is obscene, silly

and vulgar talk" (Ephesians 5.4). Remember how, and so with whom, and how constantly, Paul had traveled, how well he, like his Lord, knew how so many people spoke and looked at others, what was in the their minds. And remember that the Greek word *porne* has the widest meaning, wherever it is used in the New Testament, for any kind of sexual impurity, any disobedience to God's will in matters of sexual behavior.

But don't ever be tempted by journalists into careless use of the phrase "living in sin" to refer only to sexual behavior! Rather, keep it in service; but as a simple and woefully accurate description of our condition, of our falling short of holiness, especially as citizens of Western, democratic societies caught up into the pervasive sinfulness of the economic systems upon which the whole fabric of our lives has been built over centuries.

So three points to sum up:

There is a Way along which God calls every Christian, and so of course all of us called to the Church's ministries, to walk, a holiness with a given character to be learned, discerned in detail, lived and longed and striven for; and in the 21st century too "par-

ticipating in God's holiness" (Heb. 12.10) entails our being different, set apart: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God — what is good and acceptable and perfect." (Rom. 12.2). Second, as ordained ministers we are called to be (in the language of the Ordinal) a "pattern and example to Christ's people," by the quality and detail of our own discipleship encouragement to our fellow-Christians in their growth into holiness — "be imitators of me, as I am of Christ" (I Cor. 11.1). Third, and of fundamental importance for otherwise all this would be utterly beyond us: God has made and continues to make us all able to love him and to serve him and to grow into his holiness, through Jesus, his death and his resurrection, through his Holy Spirit, through his gift of the means of grace: "We have been buried with him by baptism into his death, so that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life." (Rom. 6.4).

— The Rt. Rev. Michael Scott-Joint, Bishop of Winchester, U.K.



HILLSPEAKING

TREES! Trees define Hillspeak: Cedar, cherry, dogwood, hickory, maple, oak, persimmon, pine, plum, poplar, redbud, sycamore, walnut. All abound on the forty-plus acres that make up Hillspeak, the center portion of Grindstone Mountain.

There are two outdoor swings on Grindstone. In either one you can look straight ahead, to your right, to your left — or straight up and you will see ... trees!

If you are enjoying the breeze that comes up from Deer Valley in the swing between the front porches (each of them has a swing also) of the Farm House and the Old Residence, a very tall and very old sycamore will be in your line of sight; look to your right to see the forest that covers most of neighboring Pond Mountain; to the left, the trees that mark the entrance to the Silver Cloud Trail. And if you look straight up you will see that you are shaded by a maple tree — also very tall and very old.

If you sit in the swing in the Farm House backyard you will, again, be shaded by a maple

tree — not quite so tall nor as old (it was planted when Patient Wife and I moved to Hillspeak thirty-plus years ago) as the other. Your view to the right will include not only the Pond Mountain trees but the largest pussy willow I have ever seen and an Androscoggin poplar that is larger and older than is usual for these hybrids.

St Mark's Cemetery, a short walk from either swing, is shaded and guarded by five old oaks. At the southeast corner of the cemetery stands a gnarled blue spruce that shows plainly how the prevailing winds blow atop Grindstone Mountain. To round out the cemetery trees, a Norwegian fir stands midway on the south fence line. Leading to the cemetery is a line of Virginia pines planted some twenty years ago. They are a favorite hangout for cardinals and finches.

Trinity Park, which lies to the south and west of the Twin Barns and the cluster of houses, is lined by a thick interweaving of maples, oaks and walnuts. Almost in the center is an

Australian willow that pinpoints the location of the Hillspeak Memorial. The southeast corner of the park is shaded by probably the largest, and perhaps oldest, oak on Grindstone Mountain.

Individual trees take on a personality of their own. My favorites are the blue spruce at the corner of the cemetery (I admire its tenacity); the sycamore across the county road (it's slow to leaf in the spring and each year I have to sweat it out until I see the first green); but my all-time, number one, most favorite tree of all is half a wild cherry that stands at the corner of our workshop. Sometime, on a Sunday afternoon in the early '90s, it was struck by lightning. It was, literally, cut in half and there seemed to be no way it could survive. Some fifteen years later it is still here and, as with the sycamore, I sweat out its first leaves each spring.

Come visit Hillspeak when you can, but please do not be like the lady visitor from Texas who was disappointed with both Eureka Springs and Hillspeak because she "couldn't see anything for the trees."

Both then and now, we sorta like it that way.

— *The Trustees' Warden*

A Mission Shaped Church

Nothing could be more important right now for the church than grappling with our mission.

There is a struggle for Australia's soul. We are no longer the Christian nation we once thought we were. In response, the Anglican Church has been floundering around, not knowing quite what shape to take in a secular environment. We don't want to surrender our beliefs or compromise our worship, but we want to be relevant to our society. This dilemma cries out for a serious reflection and intelligent strategy.

Mindful of these things, the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Australia meeting in Perth in 2004 listened carefully to a major presentation on mission and church attendance across the Australian dioceses. Synod then moved into conference mode, which enabled synod members to discuss in small groups the presentation and make feedback. The feedback indicated that:

1. Many General Synod members recognize the situation of declining attendance and our dimin-

ished effectiveness at mission.

2. There is a need to develop a mixed economy approach to church life. This means an approach that encourages a diversity of types of churches.

3. There is a need to understand mission beyond the traditional understanding of evangelism.

For the Anglican Church of Australia, the clock is ticking about our future. The majority of our congregations are elderly; our impact on society is minimal. While there has been a significant growth in our welfare and education services, congregational growth across Australia has been negligible. The time for dramatic action has arrived.

Why a Mission-Shaped Church in Australia?

As Australian Anglicans, we have the opportunity to be missionaries in our own backyard. This might be self-evident for those who live in Bankstown, Carlton or Griffith where people from a diverse range of nationalities are met through our workplaces, schools or shopping centers. It might be less evident if we happen to live in areas where people look, sound and seem to

share what we might call 'English' values.

But look closer. Sit on the steps of Flinders St. Station in central Melbourne after 10pm, be in Surfers Paradise during "schoolies" week, head down to Cottesloe Beach, Perth, take in Adelaide's Fringe Festival or just sit in a café at the Salamanca markets in Hobart and the chances are that the Australia you see isn't necessarily the one you grew up with. This is the new reality of a cross-cultural ministry in Australia today.

The good news for Australian Anglicans is that we can be a church shaped by mission. The great news is that God will go with us if we are prepared to follow the Apostle Paul's example of becoming "all things to all people that we might by all means save some" (I Cor. 9:22). If we take the cross-cultural challenge seriously, Australian Anglicans might just find that the best years for our Church lie ahead and not behind.

— An excerpt from
*Building the Mission Shaped
 Church in Australia*,
 (Rainbow Books, October 2006),
www.rainbowbooks.com.au

A Song of the Saints of God

My father died on Saturday, December 22, 2001. The next day after Church, I drove around half-heartedly looking for a Christmas tree. I was ambivalent about having a tree that year, but decided to make the effort in deference to Christmas Past. However, all of the nearby tree farms were closed, and the remaining pre-cut trees, repeatedly rejected since Thanksgiving, were a sorry lot. The next day was Christmas Eve and I awoke still thinking about the tree.

Retrieving the "Thrifty Reminder" from last week's trash, I scanned its advertisements, then called a place in South Windsor and listened to its recorded announcement: "Trees on sale till December 24th." The message did not actually say, "We're open on December 24th," but I thought there was a chance so I pulled a map from the computer and was on my way. After what seemed a long time, and after a few wrong turns, I reached the outer boundary of Dzen Farms, with acres and acres of evergreens. How would I ever make a choice among so many? Finally I came to the entrance - CLOSED! And not a soul in sight. My eyes filled with

tears, but another sign indicated that Dzen Farms also ran a Christmas shop down the road, and I determined that if there were someone at the shop I would plead my case, and they would find it in their hearts to let me enter the field and cut myself a tree. I drove on slowly, looking from left to right, but no Christmas shop came into view. Just as I was about to give up, a sign appeared at an ordinary looking house: "CHRISTMAS TREES - PRE CUT OR CUT YOUR OWN."

I turned into the driveway and asked tentatively, unwilling to get my hopes up, "Are you really open?" "Oh yes," was the reply, "would you like a tree that's already cut? They're on sale." "I'd rather cut my own, if that's all right," I said, and it was all right, and I took my time, as I always do, searching for the perfect tree. There were plenty to choose from, though not the overwhelming number I had surveyed from a distance at Dzen Farms. Eventually I selected and cut down a lovely spruce, and brought it back to the car. A slim, smiling woman came out of the house. "Well, you must have everything ready for Christmas and be saving the tree for last,"

she greeted me. I burst into tears. "No," I said, "nothing's ready. My father died on Saturday, but my sister's coming tomorrow, and I decided we should have a tree." She took me in her arms and said, "That's just what your Dad would have wanted you to do." I thanked her from the bottom of my heart and told her how everywhere I had looked it was too late to get a tree till I came upon her house. "We're always open on Christmas Eve," she said. "But if you come sooner, before school vacation, call first because I teach and sometimes there's no one here."

Getting from my home in Suffield to Old Orchard Farm, as the place is called, is confusing and inconvenient, but I vowed that as long as Christmas trees were sold there, I would manage to find them. The next year, I literally had to retrace my steps, using the map to Dzen Farms in order to locate Old Orchard. This time a young man waited on me and accepted my check. I asked him if he lived there, and finding that he did, I told him that a woman I assumed was his mother had been very kind to me the year before when my father had just died, and I asked him to convey my thanks to her again.

On Christmas morning the phone rang. "Virginia?" queried the voice on the other end. "Yes," I answered, puzzled, since anyone who really knows me calls me Wendy. "This is Mrs. Slejda at the Christmas tree farm. I just called to let you to know I was thinking about you. How are you doing this Christmas?"

The check, I remembered later. That must be how she knew my name and phone number, after her son reminded her of the scene the previous year. But how many people would have paused to consider that this might be another difficult Christmas, and then taken the time to call and acknowledge that? *You can meet them in shops, or in trains, or at tea, ... or on cold Christmas Eves, when you're buying a tree! ... Yes, The world is bright with the joyous saints who love to do Jesus' will.* And it's important to notice them, and to keep them alive in our hearts, for they protect us against the seduction of cynicism, and remind us that "the Light shines on in the darkness, and the darkness has never overcome it."

— Virginia "Wendy" Riggs Lyons
Suffield, Connecticut



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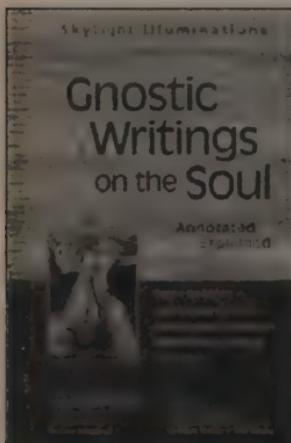
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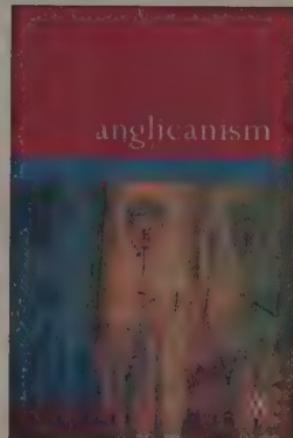


ANGLICANISM: The Answer to Modernity, edited by Duncan Dormor, Dean of St John's College, Cambridge; Jack McDonald, Dean of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge; and Jeremy Caddick, Dean of Emmanuel College, Cambridge; preface by Rowan Williams.

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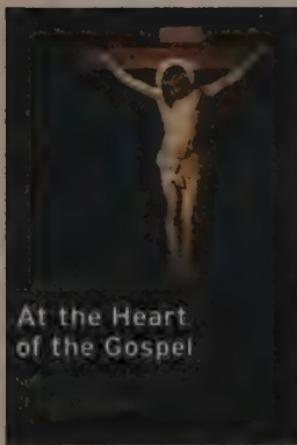
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Jervis hopes that hearing Paul's words on suffering in a fresh light may allow readers to be deeply marked, like the saints and shapers of Christianity, by the power of a gospel of which

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Before entering the Society of Jesus, Hiroshi Katayanagi, also the photographer of this special book, spent a year in Calcutta as a volunteer with Mother Teresa. During that time he had the privilege of taking many wonderful candid photographs of this modern saint. [He] presents these photographs with accompanying words and prayers of saints dear to Mother Teresa and quotations from scripture that are both moving and relevant.

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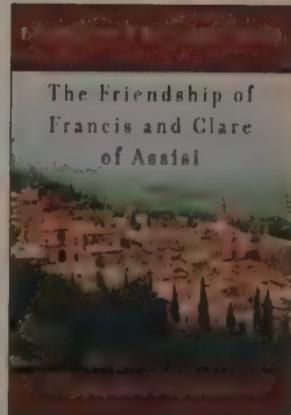
Of related interest:

My Dear Children: Mother Teresa's Last Message, edited by Hiroshi Katayanagi, Item P066T, \$12.95



LIGHT IN THE DARK AGES: The Friendship of Francis and Clare of Assisi, by Jon M. Sweeney, author of many books, including History Book Club and Book-of-the-Month Club selections.

The Middle Ages were not so very *dark*, as the old text-books say. As you will discover in this intriguing portrait, we live in "dark ages" whenever we lose sight of the ideals of the Sermon on the Mount. In this popular history, Jon Sweeney reveals the many ways that Francis and Clare inspired change and brought light into darkness, as well as the timeless temptations that come with being human — greed, competition, ego, and selfishness.



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The Joy of Christmas

We, who were made in God's image, now live too often in the dark shadow and dim memory of what God longs for us to be. Sadly we fashion almost everything after our own fallen nature. The mastery of nature by technology gives us comfortable and secure accommodations, closed off and sterile environments, superficial and predictable relationships, efficient and mechanical pastimes.

What it means to be truly human eludes us amidst all the spectacle. Even so, the spark is still there. See the bold inquisitiveness that scans the heights of the heavens and explores the depths of the neutron. Behold the burning desire that builds an empire, nay a world, from the anthropomorphic antics of a mouse, a child's imaginary friend.

But God has not lost sight of who we are by his glory and who we are destined to become by his grace. Long ago, at just the right time, he emptied himself of all pretense and premise, wrapped only in the garments of a humble vulnerable limitless love, and

was born among us. He came to share our lives, live our suffering and death, and show us the divine fulfillment and purpose of our human existence.

Jesus comes once again this year to awaken in us the hunger and thirst for his Kingdom here on earth, to make us his brothers and sisters, to make us co-conspirators in his divine campaign against poverty, injustice, hatred, prejudice, arrogance, selfishness, lust, envy, pride, sloth, gluttony, cruelty, war and every illness. He comes to give us salvation, healing and wholeness, through the transformation of our hearts and minds.

There is nothing quite so powerful as this story, because every human soul knows somehow that it is true. Even the premature, prepackaged, predictable, piped-in music of a tamed Florida wilderness cannot ruin the joy of God's heart. For Jesus IS the joy of his heart — not to mention the desire of all the nations. And he has come and is knocking on the door of every human heart. And the Holy Spirit's JOY is the great transformer of hearts and minds.

For one thing a little mouse can tell you, if you're really listening, is that there is nothing in heaven or on earth quite so contagious, or healing, as a child's laughter and delight. And there is not a child in heaven or on earth who hears the story of the baby Jesus, with or without the tinsel and the twinkling lights, and doesn't say: Whoopee!

So I say: Let's celebrate!

— The Rev. Andrew Kline,
Christ Church,
Denver, Colorado

Developing Contacts

1. Send attractive household mailings through a delivery service with an invitation to attend and with an invitation to personal phone contact. "If you are interested in baptismal preparation, marriage preparation, or any church activities, call me at my office Tuesday and Thursday evenings between 7:30 and 9:30."

2. Hand deliver door-to-door flyers to parish neighborhoods in turn, with an attractive invitation to attend and a list of parish activities.

3. Ask parishioners to arrange visits for you with neighbors or relatives who might be interested in a pastoral visit.

4. Regularly post church service times and special activities on the community notice boards in the parish.

5. Make pastoral calls on people who attend parish social events but have not yet come to church.

6. Make follow up visits to people who have had baptisms, weddings or funerals at the parish, but who have not yet got into the pattern of attendance.

7. Find a small team of people in your parish who have the salesperson personality and who like people and the adventure of the unknown, and go door to door visiting in your neighborhood one night per month, searching out Anglicans or people who "might be interested" in your parish services, Sunday School or activities.

— The Rt. Rev. Ron Ferris
Bishop of Algoma



DEATHS



¶ **Mrs. Dorothea Lowery Barlow**, 76, in Cobblers Green, Connecticut. She served as former treasurer of the national board of Episcopal Church Women.

¶ **The Rev. Christopher Connell**, 59, in Miami, Oklahoma. He served as rector of All Saints', Great Neck, New York from 1999 to 2002.

¶ **The Rev. Clayton E. Crigger**, 79, in Virginia Beach, Virginia. He served as founding rector of St. Francis', Virginia Beach from 1963 until retiring in 1985.

¶ **The Rev. Douglas C. Colbert**, 72, in DeBary, Florida. He served as rector of parishes in Minnesota and Hawaii from 1960 until 1970 when he joined the U.S. Army as a chaplain where he served until retiring in 1992.

¶ **The Rev. Delmer Dorsey**, 81, in Stuart, Nebraska. He was ordained in 1974 and served for several years as priest-in-charge at St. Mary's, Bassett, Nebraska.

¶ **The Rev. Beverly Eaton**, 84, in Laramie, Michigan. She was ordained a deacon and priest in

2006 and served at Christ Church, Calumet, Michigan.

¶ **The Rev. Robert M. Haven**, 81, in Zanesville, Ohio. He served as rector of St. Ann's, Amsterdam, New York from 1961 until 1989.

¶ **The Rev. Edward W. Johnson**, 82, in Fairfield, Connecticut. He was rector of St. Mary's, Enfield, Connecticut from 1965 to 1990. He was named rector emeritus in 2001.

¶ **The Rev. Frederick Linus Long**, 86, in Belleville, New Jersey. Ordained in 1956, he served as rector of Christ Church, Belleville from 1958 to 1990.

¶ **The Rev. Beverley McEachern**, 65, in Hamilton, Georgia. Ordained in 1980, she served as rector of St. Nicholas', Hamilton from its inception in 1998.

¶ **The Rev. William V. Murray**, 89, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He served as rector at St. Thomas', Malverne, New York from 1959 until 1982.

¶ **The Very Rev. John Kimball Saville, Jr.**, 90, in Redlands, California. He was ordained a

priest in 1943 and served as rector at St. Michael's, Los Angeles, from 1945 until retiring in 1980.

† The Rev. Susan Sager, 64, in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Ordained a priest in 1983, she was an advocate for the homeless in the Diocese of the Rio Grande, working at St. Martin's Hospitality Center in Albuquerque.

† The Rev. Alma Simpson, 82, in Fairmont, Minnesota. She was ordained a deacon in 1981 and served several parishes in Minnesota.

† The Rev. Canon Gordon Benson Yeaton, 80, in Irvine, California. Ordained a priest in 1990, he assisted at St. Andrew's, Irvine, as well as other parishes in the area.

† The Ven. Jim Upton, 57, in Newton, Kansas. Ordained to the diaconate in 1984, he was a former Archdeacon of the Episcopal Diocese of Kansas. He served on the board of North American Association for the Diaconate Diocese.

*Rest eternal, grant unto them
O Lord,
and let light-perpetual
shine upon them.
May they Rest in Peace
and Rise in Glory.*



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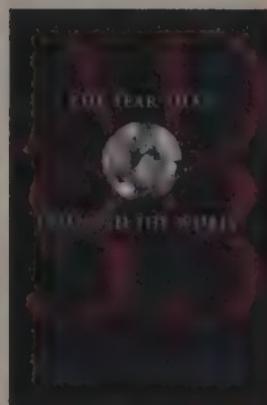
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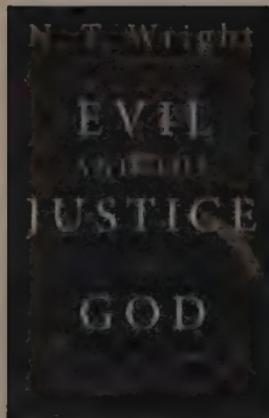
A.D. 33: The Year That Changed the World, by Colin Duriez (IVP Books, \$22). Colin Duriez has authored several books on the works of Tolkien and C.S. Lewis.

In A.D. 33 an obscure religious teacher died a criminal's death in a distant outpost of the Roman Empire. This was an event with world-changing consequences. What was the world like in that momentous year? In this fascinating book, Duriez lets us follow events in the Roman Empire and beyond to obtain a vivid picture of the year of Jesus' death.



Roman Emperor Tiberius who was trying to end the mischief caused by his deputy Sejanus, while also keeping a tight reign on the administration of his vast and diverse empire, when Jesus was put to death by one of Tiberius's minor governors, Pontius Pilate. Belief in his resurrection from the dead three days later invigorated his demoralized followers, leading within a few weeks to the birth of the Christian movement, which was ultimately to take over the mighty empire without force and to change the world irrevocably. While momentous events unfolded in the lives of these two leaders, one temporal and one spiritual, millions of people carried on their daily routines, rising at dawn and going to their rest in the evening.

Evil and the Justice of God, by N.T. Wright, Bishop of Durham (IVP Books, \$18). Tom Wright, one of the foremost theologians of our age, is always accessible and informative but the timeliness of the topic and the insightful way in which he approaches it from a solid Biblical foundation without becoming pedantic gives hope for those of us who care about the hard questions in life.



The terrorist attacks of 9/11, civilian deaths in the war-torn Middle East, and natural disasters such as the tsunami and Hurricane Katrina have awokened the world once again to the reality of evil. *Evil and the Justice of God* envisions a world that can be delivered from evil. Though neither the Old nor New Testament explains why evil exists, the Bible does tell the story of how God deals with it. Further, it points Christians to a time when evil will be defeated — and charges us with responsibility to work toward that promised future

Wise Choices: A Spiritual Guide to Making Life's Decisions, by Margaret Silf (Independent Publishers Group, \$14). Margaret Silf is a British writer and spiritual retreat leader who lives in the West Midlands of England. Her books include writings on Ignatian spirituality and Celtic worship. She has a gift for combining spiritual thought and insight with down-to-earth practice.

While no one can tell us how or what to decide when we are faced with choices and decisions, in *Wise Choices*, Silf offers insight into how we can sift through the meaningless and distracting to get to the essential and important — the things that will matter to ourselves and to others. She offers encouragement and the presence of a companion on the way in this little volume.



The Birth of a Child

When you think of Advent, what words and images come to your mind? Two of the words that come to my mind are "preparing" and "waiting." At first these sound like contradictory messages but I want to suggest that they are really two sides to the same coin.

John the Baptist comes "preparing the way." We, too, are called to prepare the way. The problem is that much of what we think of as preparation, especially in December, can be pretty manic. We fight one another for limited parking places at the mall; we worry that if we don't get our shopping done Christmas won't come; our social calendars fill beyond full. In short, Advent preparation can become frenetic.

So I invite you to a counter-cultural approach that I think is in fact at the heart of what Advent is about: preparing our hearts and minds and bodies for the one who is coming. Find time to do an adult study, or pray the daily office, or go for a long walk, or attend a mid-week service. Make time for your family to eat supper together — even if you have to say no to sixteen other things. Light those candies on an Advent wreath, one at a time. Put first things first: that is Advent preparation.

On the other end of the spectrum, we tend to think of waiting as a passive activity. Especially in families with very young children, parents actively "prepare" as children anxiously "wait."

But Advent waiting is active. Advent waiting is about cultivating practices that open our eyes and our ears so that when the Christ breaks in, we have eyes that see and ears that hear. Passive waiting almost always leads to disappointment because we aren't engaged. We think God is going to do it all. But God waits with Zechariah and Elizabeth, and with Mary and Joseph. God needs their "yeses" to stir things up in Advent.

When a couple is waiting for the birth of a child, waiting and preparing come together. There are things the family needs to do to "get ready." But they are not in control. The process of waiting and watching a belly grow is active and energizing and even a little scary.

The birth of a child is a great joy, but it comes also with holy fear. It comes as a great gift, but also with a great responsibility.

We wait and we prepare, as a parish, for the birth of a child: for the coming of Christ. We wait and prepare for God-with-us. May we use this time in ways that cultivate life for each of us, for those dear to us and for our church.

— The Rev. Dr. Richard Simpson, St. Francis, Holden, Massachusetts

*But as for me, I keep watch for the Lord;
I wait in hope for God my Savior;
My God will hear me.*

*Keep your Church alert, Holy Spirit,
ready to hear when you are calling,
and when you challenge us.*

*Keep us hopeful, Holy Spirit,
knowing that Christ will come again.*

— via Little Portion, St. Francis, Holden, Massachusetts

Why Jesus Is Better than Santa Claus

Santa lives at the North Pole ...
JESUS is everywhere.

Santa rides in a sleigh ...
JESUS rides on the wind and walks on the water.

Santa comes but once a year ...
JESUS is an ever present help.

Santa fills your stockings with goodies ...
JESUS supplies all your needs.

Santa comes down your chimney uninvited ...
JESUS stands at your door, knocks, and enters your heart.

You have to wait in line to see Santa ...
JESUS is as close as the mention of his name.

Santa lets you sit on his lap ...
JESUS lets you rest in His Arms.

Santa doesn't know your name. all he can say is "Hi little boy or girl.
what's your name?" ...
JESUS knew our name before we did.
Not only does He know our name.
He knows our address too.
He knows our history and future and
He even knows how many hairs are on our heads.

Santa has a belly like a bowl full of jelly ...
JESUS has a heart full of love.

All Santa can offer is HO HO HO ...
JESUS says "Cast your cares on me for I care for you."
Santa's little helpers make toys ...
JESUS makes a new life, mends wounded hearts, repairs broken
homes and builds mansions.

Santa may make you chuckle but ...
JESUS gives you joy that is your strength.

While Santa puts gifts under your tree ...
JESUS became our gift and died on the tree.

It's obvious there is really no comparison. We need to remember
WHO Christmas is all about.

We need to put CHRIST back in Christmas, Jesus is still the reason
for the season.

Yes, JESUS is better, he is even better than Santa Claus.
Merry CHRISTmas!

No Permanent Address

Ever since my wife Anne and I moved out of the rectory and into our house on Barre Street last month, our mail has been arriving a few days late with yellow "change of address" stickers in place. We've filled out lots of address forms supplied by the businesses that send us bills, and I've had to smile when the form asks for not just our "new address," but also our "permanent address." If there's one lesson this move has already taught us, it's that we don't really have a "permanent address." Twenty-one years in the same location is a long time, but it's far from "permanent." I think the message to be learned is an important one for all of us who call ourselves Christians. This world is not our home! Anyplace we happen to live is never more than a temporary residence. If we can allow ourselves to look beyond our familiar surroundings and remember that one day we'll leave it all behind, we'll be more able to appreciate our temporary blessings and better prepared to let go of them when moving time arrives.

We know, of course, that Jesus grew up in Nazareth, but the Scriptures are also clear that after

his baptism, he lived as itinerant teacher, moving from place to place and town to town. There's no evidence that he inherited any property. He told one would-be follower, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." He did use Peter's house in Capernaum as a ministry base, so that during his visits there, he was described as being "at home." But clearly, Jesus knew that his real residence was nowhere in this world.

Once this reality has found a place in our thinking, we will be able to sit a little looser to the places we call home and to the things that contribute to our temporary comfort. God calls us to be good stewards of his short-term gifts, especially those with long-term mortgages. But we are not to get too wrapped up in any place as the source of our security or the origin of our identity. We are only incidentally "from Charleston" or "from Mt. Pleasant" or "from West Ashley." We are not really from South of Broad or from Barre Street. We are from God, and by his grace, we are going back to God.

— The Rev. Rick Belser,
Saint Michael's, Charleston,
South Carolina

Clarity on the Nature and Ministry of the Holy Spirit

I am a Christian, but I still have a desperate need for clear, coherent teaching on the Holy Spirit. Thanks be to God; the catholic faith includes a clear, coherent doctrine of the Holy Spirit. I want to teach you that doctrine.

In the Creed we say, "We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified" (BCP, p 327). Christians worship the Holy Trinity. We know the Holy Spirit inside the Holy Trinity; he proceeds from the Father and the Son; he moves between the Father and the Son.

The Holy Spirit was wonderfully manifest at the Baptism of Jesus. Mark 1:9-10: "And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in the Jordan. And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him: and there came a voice from heaven saying, 'Thou art my beloved son, in whom I am well-

pleased.'" That picture is an icon of the Blessed Trinity, an icon of the Holy Spirit. There you see the Holy Spirit as a dove: as the pleasure of the Father over the Son. Hold that picture in your mind; the great teachers of the Christian tradition understood the Holy Spirit by that picture. The Holy Spirit is the love of the Father for the Son, the love of the Son for the Father. The Holy Spirit in you is the love of the Father for the Son, his love proceeding — moving — in your soul.

The Holy Spirit is not amorphous, or vague. In the Christian understanding, the Holy Spirit has clear identity and purpose. The Holy Spirit is the Fire of Divine Love: the Love of the Father for the Son, the Love of the Son for the Father.

The Holy Spirit is the motor of Creation. According to the Book of Genesis, the Spirit "moved upon the face of the waters," (Gen 1:2) and drew Creation out of the deep. According to the Book of Psalms, the Holy Spirit gives life and breath to every living creature (Ps 104:29, 30).

The Holy Spirit is not just a mood you are in, not just a

thought in your head. The Holy Spirit is God-moving, and when the Holy Spirit moves in you, you are taken up and into the Life of God; you are placed inside the Holy Trinity.

The Christian understanding of the Holy Spirit is Trinitarian: Trinitarian and Christ-centered. Keep that picture in your mind. The Holy Spirit moves between the Father and the Son. Any spirit or thought in you, apart from the Holy Trinity, apart from Jesus Christ, cannot be the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit creates love and obedience to Christ. This is the clear teaching of Jesus. John 15:26 Jesus said, "When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, the Spirit of truth which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me..." The Holy Spirit is love to Christ. John 16:14 "He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and show it unto you."

Christian, you can make a distinction — an intelligent distinction — between the Holy Spirit in your soul, and a spirit of deception or imagination. Here's the distinction: the Holy Spirit will draw you to Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit gives

faith in Christ, hope from Christ, love to Christ.

You look at the Cross, and you feel your heart aching: that's the Holy Spirit. You open the Bible, and your heart begins burning: that's the Holy Spirit. You hold up your hands for Communion, and you feel your heart melting: that's the Holy Spirit. You feel what the Father feels.

These days there are people — even in the Church — who claim to set aside the commandments of Scripture by the leading of the Holy Spirit. They are confused. It is impossible. The Holy Spirit doesn't take away commandments! The Holy Spirit gave us the commandments! In John 14:15, Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments."

Whatever be your challenge, whatever your problem, you have more power than problems: you have the Spirit of God, proceeding through your soul, his life in your life. You know what it is, so go with it; follow it. You're going to be great. God speed!

— The Rev. Kevin Holsapple,
Saint Anne's,
Crystal River, Florida

Of the Father's Heart Begotten

Of the Father's heart begotten,
 Ere the world from chaos rose,
 He is Alpha: from that fountain
 All that is and hath been flows:
 He is Omega, of all things
 Yet to come the mystic close.
 Evermore and evermore.

These words from Marcus Prudentius echo through the last seven-hundred years. I suggest we can enrich our Advent and Christmas sermons by reflecting on the eternal nature of God the Son. And that by so doing, we can deepen our parishes' appreciation of the Incarnation.

Even though the Nicene Creed clearly describes the eternal being of the Son, I think most parishioners, and certainly most visitors, believe that God the Father always was, but that God the Son had no existence before Mary's assent.

Prudentius' words bypass the theological confusion of both regular parishioner and yearly visitor. The Son is "of the Father's heart begotten." The Father's prime intention is the Son; he is the prime Apostle of Father's heart. The Son's teachings, healings, his birth, death, and resurrection all point to this desire of Father's heart: to know and be known, to create and redeem.

At no time of the year is loneliness more felt than during the winter holidays; therefore, for both pastoral and theological reasons, preach the eternal Son. Do not let people assume that he is just a cute baby in a manger, who will one day make good. Preach Jesus as the incarnate desire of the Father to reveal his heart, evermore and evermore.

— The Rev. Alexander D. MacPhail,
 Christ Church, Gordonsville, Virginia

Why is There No Cat in the Crèche?

I read recently of the rector of a church (not ours) being startled to find a plastic dinosaur in amongst the sheep and cows in the Sunday School's Christmas crèche. Thinking about this, I realized that I have never seen a cat depicted in the Bethlehem scene. And this is strange, for surely, every barn and stable has a cat or two about the place: to misquote, "A shed isn't a barn without a cat!"

The cat came in from the wild to be man's companion and helper (when it suited them) thousands of years ago. They hold an honoured place in ancient Egyptian carvings. But it is still undetermined whether man tamed the cat — or whether the cat beguiled mankind into making a place for them in the family circle!

For the last 21 years, Olive and I have had our hearts warmed by the constant presence of a small furry feline companion who went very simply by the name of Kitty. With our children grown up and away from home, no one could have been more a part of our lives. In order not to leave

her in boarding kennels, we acquired a motor home so that she could be with us when we went on holidays. She has sniffed around bushes from Prince Rupert to Toronto to California and all around the Prairie Provinces. In every campground she attracted a circle of admirers and numerous Christmas cards are addressed to "Olive, Hugh and Kitty."

Probably her parents were alley cats, but she was always fastidiously clean, and a perfect lady around the house. We treated her as one of the family — and she accepted us on the same footing.

But cats age faster than humans, and worn out with the years, she took her last breath in our kitchen on the evening of Dec. 19th. Probably only those who have known the companionship of a cat will appreciate how much we are going to miss her. But I know that we shall always feel that here was one of God's creatures which deserved to be in, and who would not be out of place purring away in admiration of the Holy Infant in a Christmas crèche.

— The Rev. Hugh Christmas
Calgary, Canada

Beginning Again

It was a cool fall day in Paris. I went to visit a newcomer to our congregation named Peter. Peter had recently moved to France from Nigeria to try to make a career in theater and was one part starving actor and one part political refugee.

If the four floors of steps leading to the dark attic or the shared Turkish toilet in the hall didn't demonstrate his struggles, the tiny one room apartment certainly did. His room was bare, devoid of any decoration or ornament except the Sunday bulletins from the cathedral that were thumbtacked on the wall. It seemed so harsh, so tragic.

Yet, when we walked in, he welcomed us with such a wonderful smile that all those concerns melted away. The next hour or so with Peter became one of the most meaningful of all my time in Europe. That young man had experienced more suffering in his life, in his history, and in his family than most of us can imagine. Despite it all, he was literally filled with joy. His face radiated peace in the most amazing way and when he spoke, the

rich timbre, emotional depth, and melodious accent of his voice expressed love in the most profound of ways. Because of these qualities, I had him take the role of Jesus in the reading of the Passion on Palm Sunday.

On many levels, he was the best Jesus we ever had — and in a congregation where Olivia DeHavilland read the Christmas lessons every year, that is quite a statement.

Beginning again is one of the themes of this season of Advent. The four Sundays leading up to Christmas are a reminder that the joy is in the journey and that both God and we are on our way to something new. Each candle of the Advent wreath is a promise, a hint of hope that — despite what it may look like in the world or in our lives — light is beginning to pierce the darkness and love is beginning again in a great myriad of ways. Each candle of the Advent wreath is a hint of hope that, as we say in the Eucharistic prayer, Christ will come again and that because of this, our confidence in Christmas is sure.

The color for Advent is purple.

In the ancient world, purple dye was made by crushing seashells of a specific kind. Because purple dye was very rare and costly, it was the color of kings. Purple is used in Advent, not in celebration of the coming of a baby in a manger but in anticipation of the king who brings victory of light over darkness and hope over despair and takes away the sting of death forever.

Unfortunately, the great themes of Advent are far from the minds of people caught not in anticipation but in a chaotic pre-Christmas rush. It seems that waiting for Christmas ended about Halloween and that we are in a time of catch-up, always feeling like there is too much to do. In the midst of it all, Advent is a reminder that despite what our culture says, Christmas isn't here yet and while our world, our families, and even our

church will continue to cycle in and out of crisis, Christmas will come.

Our Advent challenge is to rediscover and rekindle love in this in-between time, to find joy in the journey, and be filled with the peace that comes from knowing that Kingdom is close at hand. That's what my friend Peter knew. That's what filled him with a joy that was contagious. Yes, there are struggles in our lives. They, however, don't have to get us down. In this time of Advent, let us stand, lift up our heads, and light our candles of hope, knowing that despite and perhaps even because of it all, the Lord of Light is on his way.

— The Rev. Benjamin Shambaugh, Dean, Cathedral Church of St. Luke, Portland, Maine

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Spiritual Direction: A Letter from Christ

The mail arrives: a few bills I do not want to open, a couple of credit card applications I do not want to consider, a bunch of catalogues for things I do not want to want. Nothing very inviting, except one hand-written envelope with a friend's return address. What a refreshing exception! In these days of email, I treasure the rare personal note or letter. Can you recall the last time you received one? Or sent one?

A personal note tells a lot about the sender. It tells that they are thinking of you, and not just when they bump into you at church or see you at work. It tells that the sender is attuned to you, because they sense it is time to drop you a line. It tells that you are important to them, because they took the time to write, stamp and send the note. It tells that they are not focused on themselves, but on others.

A personal letter can sometimes show a side of someone you have not seen, or convey a strong message that might be hard to handle

in casual conversation. This must have been the case for St. Paul. His letters in Holy Scripture "epistles" have been compelling inspiration for Christians in every age, but he understood that he was not always so compelling in person, for he wrote "For some say, 'His [Paul's] letters are weighty and forceful, but in person he is unimpressive and his speaking amounts to nothing.'" (II Corinthians 10:10, NIV). Paul used letters to capture the inspired word of God, to the benefit of every subsequent generation, and Paul is not alone in the legacy of blessed letters.

Through the centuries, many spiritual directors have practiced their ministry through correspondence, and their letters continue to instruct and inspire spiritual directors in the care of souls. One of my favorites is St. Francis

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de Sales, who lived in 17th century France. Unlike many of his colleagues, he served as spiritual director to people who were not cloistered but quite active in society. His perceptive, loving, and bold letters are a model of Christian faith and care. The masterful spiritual direction letters written by Archbishop Fenelon (18th century) and Baron von Hugel (20th century) still bear abiding counsel for those seeking a deeper walk with God. Obviously, whether it is a simple note or a soul-searching missive, a personal letter is powerful communication. In this light, meditate on the significance of this passage from St. Paul's second letter to the Corinthians:

You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of human hearts. (II Corinthians 3:3 NIV).

You are a letter from Christ!
Does it show?

— Christine Maddux,
via *The Courier*, The Cathedral
Church of Saint Luke,
Orlando, Florida

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A New Year

A new year. A time of new beginnings.

This is the time of year when we often try to get ourselves "back on track" after holiday excesses. It's the time of year when we often resolve to make changes or improvements in our lives. It's also a time to try to get "back to the basics."

What does that mean when it comes to our faith? One of the earliest descriptions of "the basics" in the church comes at the end of Acts:

"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." Each of the five parts of that verse are important.

They devoted themselves: The term describes single-minded faithfulness/fidelity to God. They made God the center of their lives. It also implies a perseverance, continuing in the pattern for the long haul.

The apostles' teaching: They shared with each other the proclamation that would later be written and preserved in the

New Testament: the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus, his ethical teachings, his works of healing and mercy.

Fellowship: Literally "the fellowship." The Greek word is *koinonia*, a sharing together in something. The early church considered themselves a new community, a new family. They spent time with each other, sharing their lives with each other.

The breaking of bread and the prayers: These two parts are both important, but are probably flipped in meaning when compared to our culture. "The prayers" probably implies more formal corporate worship, at first in the Jewish Temple itself. "The prayers" are more public. The breaking of bread probably refers to more informal, home-based, more private type of early Christian worship. Both types of worship are important. One cannot be jettisoned in favor of the other.

It's not a bad list of New Year's resolutions for us:

1. Persevering in making and keeping God at the center of our lives, the hub from which the rest

of our activities radiate out like spokes on a bicycle wheel.

2. Grounding ourselves in the reading and study of scripture, and engaging in learning more about God.

3. Gathering with and supporting our fellow Christians in living the Christian life together.

4. Making worship and prayer a priority, both in public and in private, in church and at home.

Happy 2008.

— The Rev. James P. Haney, V,
Good Shepherd, Wichita, Kansas

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From the Editor...

The Joy and Challenge of Not Knowing

"Oh Dad, there is just so much I do not know."

We dropped our oldest child Abigail off at her first year of college in August. You may remember that my mother died of cancer this past March. It is a year of rites of passage in the family.

Not long ago Abigail was in our den with her mother and me expressing her anxiety the day before she left to go to school. One thing after another was named, and then it built into crescendo, which ended with the quote with which I began this column. She was so very frustrated with how little she knew about what her future would look like.

Who could blame her? She didn't know what her room mate's personality was, what her major would be, who she would end up being friends with, whether she would like her professors, what she would think of Ohio (she is attending Wooster) and on and on and on.

Hold that thought, I said to my daughter. For it was only the day before that I was having my

daily devotions and reading in Hebrews 11 when a verse jumped off the page at me:

"By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place which he was to receive as an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was to go" (verse 8).

I spent a lot of time thinking about what that verse really meant in Abraham's own experience. He did not know if he would even make it to the place, he did not know what it would be like when he got there, he did not know how long he would stay, or what the implications for his family would be, and his list, too, was very long. But nevertheless he went in faith, for faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

So instead of not knowing being something to lament, it is something to be embraced. For if we did know all that we want to, we would not need to depend on God but on ourselves, putting us on exactly the wrong road when it comes to discipleship.

It is a shame there is not more preaching on and study of the book of Ecclesiastes these days.

Vanity of vanities, the writer says about life. The word in Hebrew is a word used for vapor; no matter how hard he tries, the vapor of what he sees always eludes the writer's grasp as he tries to fathom it. Life is apparently inscrutable in Ecclesiastes. It is not known how God is working his purpose out.

According to Ecclesiastes life is not so much a problem to be solved as a mystery to be lived. Not knowing is a good thing that drives us back to faith, back to our knees before the one who made Heaven and earth.

So I told my daughter that I was right with her in struggling with not knowing. I didn't know what exactly would happen the next day, where and how I would ultimately end up serving, how her younger sister would like her new school, whether my diocese would ever even get another bishop, and my list, too, was very long.

But there is one thing we DO know about the future, I told her. God is there. And the God who holds the future holds us in his hands right now as he calls us to go out in faith in the midst of so many unknowns every single day.

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